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Committee on Conferences
Substantive session of 2005

Draft report

Addendum

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II. Calendar of conferences and meetings

C. Improved utilization of conference-servicing resources and facilities

Improved utilization of conference facilities at the United Nations Office at Nairobi

1. At its 465th meeting, on 19 September 2005, the Committee considered the section of the report of the Secretary-General on the pattern of conferences concerning the utilization of conference facilities at the United Nations Office at Nairobi (A/60/93, paras. 31-33). The Committee learned that, as a result of vigorous marketing efforts, the Office had been very successful in attracting more meetings to its facilities. The utilization rate had increased by 28 per cent during the biennium 2003-2004, compared with the previous biennium. In addition, through further streamlining, efficiency gains and increased client orientation, it had been possible to reduce the charges for conferencing services. Moreover, the Division of Conference Services had developed and widely distributed a service manual, brochures and a welcome booklet as well as a website to enhance its visibility. The Division had also intensified its efforts to become a major conference services provider in the region.

Discussion

2. Delegations expressed satisfaction that, after repeated requests from the General Assembly, there had now been an improvement in the utilization rate in Nairobi. They also expressed the hope that the upgrading of the facilities would be sustained. The view was expressed that no authorization should be given to hold

meetings of Nairobi-based bodies in other locations. It was explained that the Secretariat was carefully monitoring the situation.

Improved utilization of the conference centre at the Economic Commission for Africa

3. At the same meeting, the Committee considered the section of the report providing an overview of efforts to improve the utilization of the facilities at the conference centre at the Economic Commission for Africa and the obstacles to be overcome (ibid., paras. 34-37). The Commission had introduced an integrated system for the management of its conferences and had conducted a fact-finding mission to identify best practices at similar conference centres within the United Nations system. There had been a notable increase in the level of activities at the centre over the past two years, with 500 events hosted in 2004 compared with 446 in 2003. However, security considerations had led to tighter control of access to, and restrictions on the use of, United Nations premises for commercial activities and this had had limited the potential to expand the use of the centre.

Discussion

4. Concern was expressed about the impact of the restrictions imposed on the Economic Commission for Africa conference centre and more information was requested about the security situation there and at other conference centres. It was hoped that legitimate users were not being prevented from using its facilities.